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CHAPTER III

THE PERIOD OF WEANING

WEANING marks the end of the infancy period.[1] It is a gradual process for which the mother prepares the infant by substituting solid foods for milk and by coaxing the child to spend more and more time on the floor of the porch rather than sitting in her lap. When she eventually decides that he is mature enough, usually during the second or third year, she prevents further breast feeding. She chooses the time in accordance with the adequacy of her child rather than his chronological age, a sickly child being weaned later than a healthy one. Several informants stated that infants stop breast feeding of their own accord, but others said that the mother stops the flow of milk by daubing her nipples with the sap of the breadfruit tree, a thick, viscous fluid, which is used by the natives as glue. If the infant is very persistent in trying to continue to suck, the mother may tell him that a *marsalai*[2] has taken the place of her milk, sometimes emphasizing this story by placing a leech on her breast.

After he has been weaned, the child must learn to depend entirely on the diet of his parents. He becomes adept at drinking soup from coconut-shell bowls, learns to munch the sago briquettes which his mother has cooked for the family, and begins to eat meat with his sago just as his parents do. He also learns that he cannot eat whenever he is hungry, but

[1] Wof's stepson Kum supplied most information on this phase of the process of socialization. He was a bright lad between four and five years old. Merik, Way's son, was also in this period. He was an unhappy child of about Kum's age, who seemed to resent the birth of his younger brother Kadowan.

[2] *Marsalai* is the pidgin English term for a class of huge supernatural beings who dwell in the swamps surrounding the tribe. These monsters usually take the form of great snakes or crocodiles. The belief in these monsters is widespread both in New Guinea and in Australia (cf. M. Mead, "The Marsalai Cult among the Arapesh," *Oceania*, IV [1933], 37-53).

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868 himself and his dependents. Thus, during childhood, he begins to participate in the hunting, gardening, and collecting occupations of his parents.

Even as an infant a Kwoma has begun his training in working for food by learning to clamber to his mother's breast. Later, during weaning, habits of helping himself to food and eating have been developed. Now the whole cycle of planting and harvesting, hunting and fishing, collecting and processing, unfolds before him, and little by little he learns to participate in one or another segment of these activities.

[252] A child learns that most of his food must be cooked before he can eat it and that if he wishes to eat between meals he [264] must learn this technique himself. At any time of the day [372] boys may roast a bunch of plantains or a breadfruit. Sometimes they build up the fire on the hearth of their mother or older sister, but more frequently they cook their snacks in groups of two or three in the forest. They learn to cook by watching and imitating their mother, and by trial and error. [861] Girls, in addition to this, are specifically trained. They are told by their mothers what to do and criticized if they do not do it correctly. Boys also receive some specific training if they try some of the more complicated dishes such as gruel or 868 soup. Both girls and boys are expected to help their mother 857 when she is cooking the main meal, standing ready to pass • [415] her a utensil or to fetch the bamboo water container. She is severe with her children for negligence in helping her, scolding them if they do not carry out her orders. Kaya, for example, severely reprimanded Mey for bringing her the old mixing sticks when she wanted the new ones.

[312] Since water and firewood are necessary for cooking, a sup- [313] ply must be kept constantly to hand. This is woman's work, [462] and consequently does not affect the boys.* A girl in the childhood age group accompanies her mother to the spring and brings back a small bamboo of water, and also forages for firewood with her mother. Older girls, though still in the childhood age group, are often given the responsibility of

* A boy will occasionally help his sister fetch water or firewood as a favor to her, but not as a duty.

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cut down the palm tree and remove a section of bark. The girl then crushes the pith, and the boy washes and squeezes it in a trough which he has constructed, allowing the milky juice to flow into a bark container set below the trough. A fine flour settles to the bottom of this container, and the water flows off. After a long morning's work a couple will have produced a sixty or seventy pound deposit of flour. The boy pours off the last of the water and wraps up the flour in a spathe. The girl places this bundle in her net bag and carries it up the mountain path to the dwelling on her back. The division of labor in sago making is maintained in part by the belief that, if a woman should do the man's part of the process, especially that of washing and squeezing the pith, the flour would be inedible.[6]

An adolescent girl takes the responsibility for cooking part of the family meal, presiding over a fireplace of her own instead of merely helping her mother. She prepares the vegetables for soup, boils sago flour, and roasts the meat. She and the older children share the meals which she cooks, thus relieving the mother from the task of providing for the whole family. The mother generally continues to cook for herself, her husband, and the smaller children. If there are two adolescent girls in a family, they usually share one fireplace and coöperate in the cooking. A girl must keep herself supplied with firewood and water.

At adolescence boys and girls must assume new gardening duties and become more specifically associated with the gardening group, which consists of from one to three adult *brothers* and their families.[7] They take their place in the gardening group of their father or, if the father has died, of a *paternal uncle*,[8] and begin to perform adult gardening tasks with the adult men and women of the group.

[6] Mar and Gwiyap, my houseboys, broke this taboo, a circumstance which will be discussed in chapter viii.

[7] There were six gardening groups in Rumbinua hamlet, headed, respectively, by (1) Wof and Marok; (2) War, Kar, and Kis; (3) Yat and Way; (4) Waramus; (5) Afok and Fokotay; (6) Kwal and Daw. Gardening groups will be discussed in more detail in chapter vi.

[8] Gwiyap and Mar joined the gardening group of Wof and Marok. Mar, in addition, had to care for a garden which had been started by an older brother who had recently died.

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pig. He managed to drive his spear into the side of a wild boar but the animal charged at him. Nowel sidestepped the beast but the handle of the spear struck him and gave him an ugly bruise on the forehead. The day after this experience he stopped at my house. Yat, Wof, and War happened to be present and asked Nowel how he had come by the bruise. When he told them, they blamed him instead of sympathizing. They said that it was a wonder that he had not been killed and asked him if he thought that he was already a man that he should have attempted such a thing.

Adolescent boys are not expected to make the tools necessary for their economic pursuits. Although each has an adz which he uses as a tool of all work, it is made for him by his father or *paternal uncle*. The lime gourd and stick, which a boy uses for preparing betel for chewing, are also made and given to him by his father or by his *paternal uncle*, the net bag, which he uses as a carryall, by his mother or his sister. Indeed the following case shows that they are prevented from manufacturing tools. Mes and Mar decided to make a canoe together. They cut down the tree and began hollowing it out under the direction of Nambomai, a river native who was working for me. When War heard what these two boys were doing, he forbade them from continuing the work. He said that they were not old enough. As soon as War was out of hearing, Mar and Mes protested that it was none of War's business and that they were not going to obey him. They worked on the canoe one more day and then gave it up. The canoe was never finished. Adolescent girls, on the other hand, are expected to produce tools. They make net bags both for themselves and for their brothers. They carry out the entire process, stripping the bark from the proper tree, preparing it, rolling it into thread on their thighs, and netting it; women's bags are voluminous, men's smaller. Adolescent girls also make bark-fiber fishing nets.

These economic activities are all in some way associated with the satisfaction of hunger. It would be inaccurate, however, to assume that these customs are maintained by this drive alone, for sex also plays a part in impelling Kwoma

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back,[22] and never to leave the hamlet unless she wears her bag. When she meets a man on the path, she must step aside with her back to the path and must not speak to him until he has passed her. 882 834

A girl, like a boy, normally has her first experience in sexual intercourse during adolescence. She, too, must be secretive in this behavior, but for reasons quite different from those which force a boy to hide his philandering. The only danger which a girl faces from a non-relative in her sexual adventures is that of rape or of being aggressively attacked. In contrast to the boy, she stands in no danger of punishment from the relatives of her lover if she is discovered. Her own relatives, particularly her brothers, are the ones from whom she must hide her behavior. It is they who try to prevent her from philandering because, if she gets a reputation for being loose, and particularly if she becomes pregnant, her value as a potential wife is decreased and her brothers will be unable to get such a high bride-price when she marries. The Kwoma rationalization for the bride-price is, in fact, that it is a payment by the husband to the brothers of his wife for having kept her pure and unblemished up to the time of her marriage. Since a brother uses the bride-price paid for his sisters to buy his own wife or wives, it is not a matter of indifference to him if his sister loses her reputation. If a girl becomes pregnant, therefore, she may expect a severe scolding and perhaps a beating from her father or brothers. 882 836 593 583 [348]

The pressures exerted upon an adolescent girl lead her to solve her sexual problem in a somewhat different manner from the boy. As has already been shown, it is she who makes the advances rather than the boy, which she can do since she runs no risk of punishment from the boy's relatives. A second consequence of the differential sanctions is that, since the girl risks punishment from her own relatives, it is more danger- 836

[22] The woman's net bag is hung from the forehead down the back and when empty reaches almost to the knees. It thus functions as an article of clothing as well as a carrying device. [415] [291]

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A variety of tools are required for special purposes in various aspects of the Kwoma economics. Spears,[10] sago scrapers, dippers, gruel mixers, bamboo water containers, and digging sticks are made by men and kept for repeated use. The sago washing outfit is assembled by the man from the materials at hand in the swamp and abandoned when the site is moved. A man constructs the pole used to hang up yam stringers from a bamboo section marker and replaces it when he is through. The men make, decorate, and harden by fire the clay pots used for cooking. All these tools and utensils are necessary to the economic activities in which they are used so that the functions and sanctions which pertain to these activities also apply indirectly to the manufacture of the tools. In addition to this, a man who does not make the necessary tools is directly criticized for his negligence by his relatives. Furthermore, a good toolmaker not only gains prestige for his dexterity, but is also able to trade any surplus of neatly made permanent tools for goods or services.

Fish is the only food product which the Kwoma obtain primarily by trade from other tribes.[11] The river natives catch a surplus of fish, whereas the Kwoma produce a surplus of sago flour. On the other hand, the river tribes do not control large enough sago swamps for their needs, nor have the Kwoma developed adequate fishing techniques.[12] A regular exchange of these products therefore takes place between the Kwoma and the river people, particularly those from the villages of Yambon, Malu, and Avatip. The women of both groups do the trading, the men going to the market only for the purpose of gossiping and in the hope of making a tryst.[13] A Kwoma girl may attend these trading meetings during childhood; she participates in them during adolescence; as

[10] The pig spear used for hunting is somewhat heavier and constructed somewhat differently from the spear used in war.

[11] Shell money, tools, and pigs are sometimes exchanged between the Kwoma and adjacent tribes. Men carry on this type of trade.

[12] Canoes are employed by the river natives for fishing. The Kwoma had only one canoe, which was so badly constructed that it could scarcely be used. Very few of the natives knew how to paddle it.

[13] In the days before the tribes were brought under control, each market was attended by armed men to prevent a possible head-hunting assault.

796
532 and told to whom they belonged. The two large ones belonged respectively
[123] to the "tultul" and the "lulusi" (pidgin for the native government repre
sentative and the village head man). We exclaimed over them and told them
they were "number one".

796 While we were being shown the figures a dance was in progress around
535 the altar. About half of the natives there were shambling around it,
[533] sometimes stepping from side to side in time to the beating of the gongs
[534] and sometimes merely walking, depending on whether or not the spirit moved
them. Sometimes everyone would be dancing; at all times at least two
of them were. The step was a sort of springy goose step, the beat emphasized
with a pause by the down-treading on one foot with the other in the air.
The raised foot was sometimes brought across in front of the other one, and
sometimes behind. In either case, the toes were pointed outward, and the
raised foot scraped along the ground. Coincident with the stepping, the
[415] body was twisted from side to side, particularly the shoulders. Practically
[276] all of the men held their betel gourds under their left arms and were
constantly dipping the spatulas in and sucking on them. Occasionally one
of the dancers would pick up a net bag (empty except for a withe inserted
around its edge to make it stiff and fanlike), hold it above his head
either in one or both hands, and twist it back and forth in harmony with
the contortions of his body. The dancers would drop in and out of the dance
at will, have a rest, smoke, take their turn at beating the gongs, and then
return.

796 For clothes, the older men wore nothing except arm and leg bands
291 (and not all of them were these); necklaces of dogs' teeth; shell; hair
301 ornaments of feathers and combs; or a combination of these. Most of the
"finish timers" were laplaps or shorts; one of them wore a laplap over his

October 20, 1936.

114 Yesterday after breakfast Mar took us to the place where he and his father were planting yams. We had made the arrangements the day before; Mar had said that it was not very far away, and so, despite the rain, we decided to go. [134] [133] What a trip! The soil here is largely made up of a sort of greasy mica which is the next thing to ice in slipperyness when it gets wet. Further, almost the entire journey was either up or down slopes varying from thirty to sixty degrees. Occasionally the tree roots provided some foothold, or in the steepest places little niches had been cut into the mud. Most of the time we were 'skating'. At least a dozen times my feet suddenly went out from under me and I fell. Tip was wearing leather boots and therefore did not fare so badly [48] as I with my tennis shoes. Mar, barefoot, padded along with a knee bending, heel and toe gait which allowed most of the surface of his splay feet to be on the ground at one time. He never seemed to slip. After about two and a half hours, we finally arrived at the 'bush house', soaked by rain and mud from without, and sweat from within.

126 123 262 252 While we were taking notes on the material culture we found there, Mar, and Marok, who was already there when we arrived, cooked some yams for us. They were boiled in a round bottomed pot made without kick. [415] [323] [439] (These pots are made by the coiling method and traded with the River people for shells.) They also cooked a bird of paradise which Tip had shot on the way with the twenty-two. It was placed on the fire, feathers and all. By the time it was done the feathers had all burned off. The meat was then torn off and eaten. It [263] [317] tasted excellent; the yams with some salt on them were good too. This salt was some that we had given them, but they say that they have a salt mine in the mountains somewhere.

123 After our meal, Sof took us to his house. We stopped to smoke a cigarette and then expected to see some yam planting, but the natives said that unless

764 [415] Next a bamboo filled with water (the usual method of carrying water) was carried up the ladder by Afalowanj, an old man; he was assisted by two other men in washing the body. Meanwhile the "savvy talks" broke the points of two spears formerly belonging to the deceased. There were passed up the ladder to the cubicle and lashed crossways over the body. The arms and legs of the body were lashed to the floor, and the burial was complete. The undertakers climbed down the ladder and went off to wash, saying that they would meet me at the house tamberan, where sortly[1] thereafter the gong tolled. As I was leaving, I heard one of the women inside of the house sobbing instead of wailing in the patterned manner.

754 Wof and some others were already at the house tamberan when I arrived. Later some of those who had officiated at the funeral came. The conversation once again turned to poison. Kwonai described the process by which he considered the men to have been killed. The group had calmed down considerably and now discussed the affair much more matter-of-factly than they had previously. They were still bitter toward the perpetrator of the deed and seemed to be afraid for their own safety. Kwonai told me someone had stolen a bit of food which the deceased had carelessly thrown away; the evil doer had then carried it to Koriyasi, who had performed a magical rite on it. They had put the leavings in a tall narrow pot, filled it half full of water, and let it boil away until only the sediment of the food remains were left. A bamboo of cold water was then poured into the pot and on the fire. That is followed by an explosion of steam. The food disappears, and soon afterward the men died.

114 October 28-Nov. 9, 1936. A week ago Friday, October 30, Tip and I went in to Ambunti to spend the weekend for the sake of a holiday. Bob Overall had brought the mail up the river that morning, so we were greeted with a very welcome packet of letters. George and Max (a medical assistant

[1] [i.e., shortly-analyst]

142 for their faces are drawn and their mouths turn down at the corners. The Weskuk on the other hand are big women. Their stomachs protrude before and their butts behind. Their bosoms are full to overflowing, and their round faces are usually split by an ear-to-ear grin. In skin colour they are noticeably lighter than the Yambons. Only one or two old women are present."

342 Yesterday afternoon (Nov. 12), I went down to Mar's house. It is a structure about eight feet high at the ridgepole with a fairly gentle slope to the roof which ends about two feet above the ground. The side walls and the back and front are made of sago bark sewed together. When dried, the bark is about the thickness and consistency of beaver board. About two thirds of the house is closed off by another wall of sago bark with only a small doorway about two by four feet, with the sill about a foot and a
353 half from the ground. This can be closed by a sago bark door. This door
342 is the only opening in the inner room, which is used for sleeping, storing their clay pots, their cooked sago, and their net bags. The latter are hung with a half coconut shell on the roof so the rats cannot get at them.
[592] In this room sleep Mar, his mother, his classificatory sister and two boys
[515] who are his classificatory brothers. They sleep with only a slab of sago bark between them and the ground. The beds are leaned up against the wall during the day. All of them sleep with their feet toward the door. Interestingly enough, Mar's wife sleeps in another house.

The third of the house not inclosed by this room acts as a sort of
[354] porch. Here a huge pot about two and a half feet in diameter and two feet
[262] high was braced up by stones over a fire and a sort of blood red soup made
[415] of a kind of bark and sago was bubbling. One of the boys dished out a half
[412] coconut full of this and ate it with a trade spoon. I noticed some spears
000

578 583 593 lage kumoyi were frequently spoken by the onlookers, and I gathered that this meant that brothers should be friends, or something of the sort.

January 18, 1937. Revision: Kis said that Daw was not angry because of theft, but because his brother had picked the betel pepers before they were ripe.

123 177 439 January 17, 1937. The day before yesterday, Mar's sister Awe wanted to buy a harmonica. I told her I would give her one for 10 yams. She brought five and Pit eight, as he also wanted one. I persisted with 10 as the number required, so Awe gave 2 of her yams to Pit to fill his quota. She didn't want anything else with her 3 yams, but was disappointed at not getting her "musik". I felt sorry for her, so I told her that if she would make me a little net bag, I would give her one. The next day she brought one up, a nice little new one, and I gave her the "musik". She went running home with it. Pretty soon there were loud voices, and she came back with her "musik" looking rather upset and wanted to call off the bargain. I asked what the matter was; she said that Wof's wife had [775] become very cross about it and had told her that the harmonica would bring gambas (ghosts) if she blew it and that she could not have it. Mar's mother sided with her daughter, but to no avail, and she was forced to bring the "musik" back.

Tip's naremboi came in and was very glad to see me and asked for his friend. He was very sorry that he was not there. He was present when Awe [415] brought back the harmonica and said that he would buy it. He had a very special net bag with two compartments which he would give me for the harmonica. He said he was a good man, and if I would give him the harmonica now, he would send the net bag in by one of his children the next day. He kept his word, and one of the children came with the net bag and the harmonica in it. I took the net bag and gave the harmonica back to the child and all was well.

578 [123] been upset because War still thinks he is guilty. Ker says that he is fed up with the place here and will go with/when I go. He says he does not feel like working.

527 262 [754] [692] [252] Last night gongs announced a Yenama pig-eating feast (or that is what they said). I went this morning. It developed that it was a court to discover who was sorcerizing Sowinambi's wife. When we arrived Mes and Sof were boiling the pig which Sowinambi had shot. Yesterday afternoon they had eaten the brains, kidneys, heart, liver, and belly. Now they had cut the rest in big chunks, without removing the skin and hair, and [415] [262] were boiling it in two large pots. The pots were not large enough to hold it all, so the chunks were put in and taken out with bamboo tongs. When the meat was done, bananas, spinach, and yams were put in the soup and boiled. The bananas were greasy, and the outer skin was peeled off with [123] the finger nail. I suggested a knife, but Sowinambi explained that the soup was for the big men and must be done this way. Sowinambi said that he [123] and Sof had to do all the work because they had no boys to help them. I helped. Some of the others made remarks -- it was not quite right for me to be doing it, but others said never mind; it was all right. The spinach was torn up by hand and put in. The yams were peeled and cut in parts.

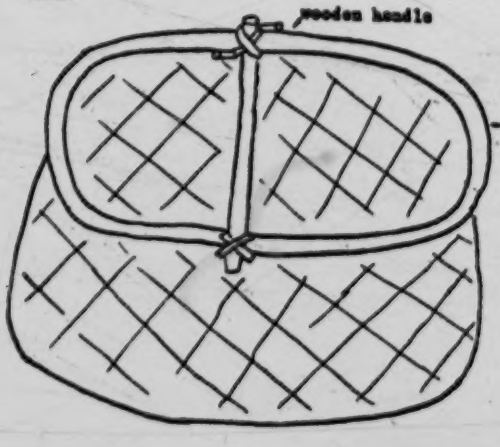
695 754 The men kept coming three or four at a time until there were about fifty there. There were greetings and general talk until finally it seemed that all who were coming had arrived, and Ngayamas (a big man of Afokalisa) got up and began talking in a loud voice. "Sowinambi's wife had been poisoned. Who has done it? I am Sowinambi's (kinship term) and I will fight anyone who is doing it." He stood up and stamped his foot on the ground [123] and held his hand over his head as if holding a spear. In the days before the white men (probably now if I hadn't been there) they actually held a spear.

Fishing

226 [462] Fishing is the work of women. One method of fishing consists of damming a small stream to change its course and picking up the fish from the dry bed. Fish nets (naye) like the one shown below are also used. The women hold the net in the stream until the fish swim into it.

Fish Net (naye)

227 [192]



• 415 [192]

Basket (hompd)

Made from palm spathe, sewn with afokwas needle and fokw, split liana cord, awl fashion.
Use to carry fish and other dry food.

252 of the distance from the strainer to keep the new unprecipitated liquid from running over and to prevent the bottom part from being stirred up. The sago has precipitated, excess water that has not yet gone through the strainer might be scooped from the top leaving the mass of sago slightly drier. The mass of sago is wrapped in leaves and carried home.

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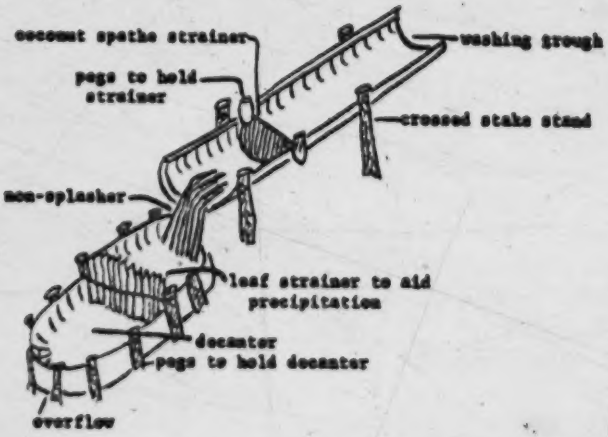
415
417

Sago Washing Trough



coconut shell dipper

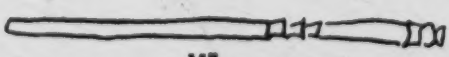
Preparation of Boiled Sago

252 [192] To make boiled sago, water is heated in a pot over the fire with a half dozen seasoning leaves (yiffabfid) simmering in it (if the boiled sago is to be particularly tasty). A large lump of sago is then put in the bottom of another pot supported on the ground by a hoop of thin wood (the pots are round-bottomed). When the water boils, the leaves are skimmed off and put aside. The water is dipped into the other pot with a coconut shell dipper until the pot containing the sago is filled. It is stirred with the two "chop sticks" held in one hand. (See figures below). The water unites immediately with the sago and makes a thick gruel which becomes rubbery when it cools. This is stirred and tested until it has cooled sufficiently to congeal. The sticks are then held in each hand and rotated around each other and pulled out, dipped, rotated, and pulled out, about

ladle (magvivfwi)

252 415 192 531

chop sticks (wuffiyi)



262 of a pancake. Next it is placed on the palm spathe, on top of the first cake, cooked side down, and another handful is put on the pot, the palm spathe, etc. until the lump is finished. Then the process of frying the other side is begun. Water in a coconut shell or pot is sprinkled over the top of the last cake until it is damp. Then it is put back on the fire the damp side down, and the next cake is sprinkled while the first one cooks. Each cake is cooked about a minute then stacked on a leaf. When they all are cooked, the pile of cakes is wrapped in the leaf and put away until time for eating, or eaten immediately.

[415 192] A piece of betel spathe (tasa mambwa) is used to scrape the stirrer (nawuri), the chop sticks (wurifi), and the pan in order to clean them.

Other containers

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415
[192]
[824]

To make a lime gourd (waf), the stem of a green gourd is cut; the seeds are chipped out with a bamboo sliver, and shaken out with some of the meat. The gourd is then stuffed with leaves of a bush taro (kwasabonk) and filled with water. It is wrapped with breadfruit leaves and cooked for about fifteen minutes. Then it is removed, emptied, and scraped inside and out. Next it is put in the sun to dry. (If the taro leaves are not put inside, the gourd will turn black.)

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192
[386]

Gourd pot (ndrimp)

This particular pot is used for storing the sap of kwar, a hardwood tree, used as a base for black body paint (kwi). A similar cradle is made for a long gourd.